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ABSTRACT

The report summarizes the evaluation of the 1985-86 Special Education Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention and Dropout Prevention (AIDP/DPP) programs which operated at 45 sites in New York City. City tax-levy DPP funds were allocated during the 1985-86 school year to the Division of Special Education to expand existing state-funded services for at-risk handicapped students at the middle school level. Services were provided to 2,343 students, 74% of whom were selected because of excessive absences; the remainder were selected based on other eligibility criteria, including academic performance and behavioral problems. The service model included six components: facilitating services, attendance outreach, counseling, health services, school linkages to promote transition to high school, and alternative education experiences. Thirty-four percent of AIDP/DPP students who participated in the program for the entire year improved their attendance rate above 1984-85 levels. Of students who failed at least one subject in the previous year, 40% improved in the proportion of subjects passed in 1985-86. Among recommendations is the reexamination of program attendance and academic performance goals in light of results, which did not meet the pre-established 50% criteria. (JW)

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A SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT DROPOUT PREVENTION AND DROPOUT PREVENTION (A.I.D.P./D.P.P.) PROGRAMS 1985-86*

This is a summary of the final report which examines the 1985-86 Special Education Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention and Dropout Prevention (A.I.D.P./D.P.P.) programs as they operated in 45 sites in the five special education regions and the citywide services unit. City tax-levy D.P.P. funds were allocated during the 1985-86 school year to the Division of Special Education to expand existing state-funded A.I.D.P. services for at-risk handicapped students. The report presents the characteristics of students in the program; examines the degree to which the program guidelines were implemented; analyzes attendance and course pass rates of student participants; and presents conclusions and recommendations. Data were obtained from student records distributed to each of the 45 A.I.D.P./D.P.P. special education sites; program staff surveys; and interviews with each of the regional program coordinators.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

As specified in program guidelines, participation in the A.I.D.P./D.P.P. program was limited to those sites with an attendance rate below the citywide median of 87 percent. Special education sites in the five regions were generally selected from the middle schools targeted for the A.I.D.P./D.P.P. middle school general education program. Program coordinators in consultation with special education Deputy Assistant Superintendents then identified sites in which there were a large number of students classified as emotionally disturbed with low rates of attendance in the 1984-85 school year. The citywide services unit selected sites based on the same criteria.

* This summary is based on "ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT DROPOUT PREVENTION (A.I.D.P.) AND DROPOUT PREVENTION (D.P.P.) SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM 1985-86 END OF YEAR REPORT" (January, 1987), prepared by the O.E.A. Special Education Evaluation Unit. The A.I.D.P./D.P.P. program provided services to 2,343

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The A.I.D.P./D.P.P. program provided services to 2,343 students. Program personnel reported that 74 percent of the students were selected because of excessive absences. The remainder were selected based on other eligibility criteria, including academic performance and behavioral problems. Of the total number of participants, 847 students began the program after the beginning of the school year. In addition, 699 students left the program before the end of the school year. Seventy-four percent of the students were boys and 26 percent were girls, reflecting the composition of special education. The students ranged in age from 12 to 21, with 78 percent falling between 14 and 16 years of age. Out of a possible 180 schools days, A.I.D.P./D.P.P. students attended an average of 129 days and passed an average of 56.6 percent of their subjects in the previous year.

Seventy-seven percent of participating students were assigned to intensive program services and 23 percent received monitoring services only. Students assigned to intensive services had an average of 47 absent days in the previous year, whereas students assigned to monitoring services had an average of 28 absent days. However, in practice students received similar program services irrespective of how they were classified.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Program Requirements

The Chancellor's guidelines established the minimum requirements for services and set limits on the personnel and resources on which funds could be spent. The basic minimum complement of services included: a facilitation component to coordinate A.I.D.P./D.P.P. with other programs operating at the sites; an attendance component with attendance outreach services; a guidance component to provide counseling to identified students, to facilitate linkages for students to related school services, and to conduct parent workshops; a health component to screen students and provide appropriate follow-up services; school-level linkages to provide high school orientations; work/study experiences; jobs (where possible) and Life Skills Training; and an alternative education component to provide appropriate high-interest programs designed to encourage attendance and improve achievement.

The A.I.D.P./D.P.P. program was organized into regional teams, and administered by a regional coordinator and an itinerant .4 full-time equivalent facilitator (either a teacher trainer, guidance counselor, or social worker). The program staff at each site consisted of an itinerant teacher trainer, guidance counselor, social worker, and family worker. Office aides were located at each site.

Component Implementation

As required, all six program components were implemented in each special education region. However, the level of services provided for each component varied among regions. This was due to a number of factors including the nature of the services offered, the availability of staff, the varied needs of students, and alternative services available in each region. Of the six program components, alternative education services and school linkages were found to be particularly effective in serving participants.

A.I.D.P./D.P.P. coordinators reported that program implementation was more effective when it was supported by school principals and classroom teachers and when office space was provided in the school specifically for A.I.D.P./D.P.P. purposes. Service delivery was constrained in sites where regular staff members with specific A.I.D.P./D.P.P. responsibilities had to devote some of their time to general administrative matters.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Program Objectives

The Chancellor's Special Circular Number 29 established performance objectives for the 1985-86 A.I.D.P./D.P.P. programs. Of these, the following objectives apply to the Special Education A.I.D.P./D.P.P. program:

- A minimum of 50 percent of the students provided with A.I.D.P./D.P.P. services will have 1985-86 attendance that is better than 1984-85.
- A minimum of 50 percent of the students provided with A.I.D.P./D.P.P. services will pass at least one more subject in 1985-86 than they did in 1984-85.
- Starting with 1985-86 as a baseline year, a minimum of 50 percent of the students, ninth grade or below, provided with A.I.D.P./D.P.P. services will still be in school three years later.

Changes in Attendance

Thirty-four percent of the A.I.D.P./D.P.P. full-year students improved their attendance rate from 1984-85 to 1985-86. Among the special education regions, attendance improvement ranged from 25.7 to 39.5 percent, with three regions having student attendance improvement greater than 38 percent. One-third of the program participants entered the program after the beginning of

the school year. To calculate their attendance improvement, two months of attendance before participation were compared to two months of attendance after program participation began. Of these short-term students, 47 percent showed immediate improvement after joining the program. If short-term students are combined with full-year students, 40 percent of the participants showed improvement compared to their pre-program attendance.

Of the 962 students for whom full-year data were available, 47 percent of students assigned to monitoring services showed improvement in their attendance. Thirty percent of the students assigned to intensive program services improved. Overall, the average percentage attendance of these full year program students declined 7.1 percentage points from 70.8 percent for 1984-85 to 63.7 percent for 1985-86. This change in attendance is comparable to that of the general education at-risk population.

Change in Subjects Passed

Of the students who failed at least one subject in the previous year, 40 percent improved in the proportion of subjects they passed in 1985-86. Because the instructional programs of special education students are individualized, the reported number of subjects varied substantially more than would be expected for general education students' programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above results, recommendations for the second full year of operation are the following:

- If resources permit, create a separate line for a full-time facilitator to handle administration and free the guidance counselor, social worker, or teacher trainer to provide service on a full-time basis.

- Alternate education and school-linkage services should be expanded and offered to more students. This would entail: training more staff in the Adkins Life Skills program; developing high-interest programs for students who function on a lower academic level; and identifying employment opportunities suitable for these students.

- Issue specific guidelines for providing more systematic interventions to students classified as needing intensive program service or monitoring service.

- Program attendance and academic performance goals might be reexamined in light of the objective data to determine if they are appropriate for this population.